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X REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PERSONNEL, 1950

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PERSONNEL,
Washington, D. C., October 1, 1950.HON. CHARLES F. BRANNAN,
Secretary of Agriculture.

DEAR MR. SECRETARY: I respectfully submit the following report on personnel administration in the Department of Agriculture. The period covered is the fiscal year 1950—July 1, 1949, through June 30, 1950.

Sincerely yours,

T. ROY REID,
Director.

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SILVER ANNIVERSARY

Nineteen hundred and fifty marks the silver anniversary of organized personnel administration in the Department of Agriculture.

Personnel work, of course, is as old as the Department itself. But 25 years ago the offices and divisions concerned with personnel and financial matters were organized into the Office of Personnel and Business Administration, of which the late Dr. Warner W. Stockberger was Director. Subsequently, business administration was organized separately.

From the seed of personnel work in 1925, which was small and limited chiefly to classification work, grew the Office of Personnel, which guides the personnel program for the entire Department. The agencies, in turn, have personnel offices. The Department Office of Personnel is divided into seven subject-matter divisions—classification, employment, organization and personnel management, training, employee relations and safety, employee health, and investigations.

Individualization of Employees

The quality of USDA personnel operations was pointed out by the Civil Service Commission in March of this year. Harry B. Mitchell, Chairman of the Commission, in a letter to the Department, particularly noted the leadership and assistance given to field establishments and the continued emphasis in the Department on the individualization of employees.

The Commission's inspection of activity in the Office of Personnel and the central agency personnel offices, Mr. Mitchell said, showed a concentrated effort to "arrive at a high degree of conformity with Commission regulations." He said he again observed the number of activities being undertaken by the Department to strengthen its personnel program in order to render efficient service to the operating divisions.

This annual report is designed to tell what happened in personnel administration during the past fiscal year, not only for the Office of Personnel but throughout the Department, and to outline some projects undertaken, some problems met, and some of the outside influences that affected departmental personnel policies.

LANDMARK CLASSIFICATION ACT OF 1949

Passage of the 1949 Classification Act was one of the year's most significant changes affecting personnel administration in the Department of Agriculture. It replaced the 1923 Classification Act and a multitude of amendments over the past few decades.

Briefly, this legislation consolidated the former P, SP, and CAF (Professional, Subprofessional, and Clerical-Administrative-Fiscal) services into one broad GS (General Schedule) of grades. It created three new top grades—GS 16, 17, and 18—and raised the classified salary ceiling—formerly \$10,330—to \$14,000 a year. Authority to allocate positions all the way up through GS-15 in the Department of Agriculture without prior approval of the Civil Service Commission was given. This intensified the work of personnel officials in USDA

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agencies. The act also set up a management improvement and cash awards plan.

Equal Pay for Substantially Equal Work

The mandate from Congress with this act said, "The Department of Agriculture, along with other departments, must follow the principle of equal pay for substantially equal work." Despite a few minor inequities remaining, as would inevitably result from such a complex realignment, the changeover was completed swiftly, accurately, and with a minimum of difficulty.

Employee Understanding of Act

Passage of the classification act provided a timely opportunity to attempt to improve the average Department of Agriculture employee's understanding of the entire classification system. So a popular-type, illustrated pamphlet explaining the pay and other principal features of the new act was prepared and given to all employees. Work was begun at the same time on more extensive visual training materials, such as flip charts and multicolor slide films, to be used to explain the principles to employees and supervisors.

Standards for Postaudit Programs

Preliminary work was done by the Office of Personnel on developing standards for use by USDA agencies in conducting their postaudit programs, which resulted from this act. The standards, when completed, will be refined during the next fiscal year. Field work involving classification was done in 21 States by the Office of Personnel. Concentration was largely on validating standards. However, some factual materials were obtained for construction of standards for specialized jobs for which the Civil Service Commission does not intend to issue standards.

Delegated Classification Authority

Closely allied to doing staff work at the departmental level is delegated classification authority. By the end of the year, delegation had been given to all but two or three of the smallest USDA agencies. The Bureau of Dairy Industry received delegated authority during the year. The Bureau of Agricultural and Industrial Chemistry completed its program of decentralizing personnel activities to the field, the last major step of this project being the delegation of classification authority to regional personnel officers. Classification authority was also delegated in the Bureau of Agricultural and Industrial Chemistry to its Eastern, Western, and Southern Research Laboratories.

Drop In O. P. Allocations

Controls on delegated classification authority remained unchanged during the year, but the allocation work of the Office of Personnel dropped from approximately 1,500 the prior year to 1,145 this year.

The number may be further reduced next year, when controls over key positions will be revised or at least key positions will be redefined. Workload of agencies in classification work is exemplified in the Production and Marketing Administration. During the year 7,000 positions were reviewed by various methods, and about 3,500 positions were allocated in PMA.

SCS Check On Vacant Jobs

Other phases of classification administration received attention also. The Soil Conservation Service, Washington office, followed a new policy of checking every job vacated before filling it, to see that the job currently met the organizational standards of SCS and the class standards of the Civil Service Commission.

FHA Automatic Surveys

The Farmers Home Administration, as part of its automatic 60-day classification survey program of State office positions, abolished all remaining standard job descriptions for secretarial, stenographic, and typist positions. Nonstandard positions are being allocated to cover the numerous clerical operations assigned to each incumbent.

PROGRAM OPERATIONS INCREASE PERSONNEL WORK

Several new program operations caused considerable personnel work and adjustment during the year.

Farm Housing Program

When Congress appropriated funds for the housing act, the Farmers Home Administration immediately had to set up many new positions, reassign and promote many employees, and recruit approximately 500 new employees to get the program under way. Many discussions and decisions were made as to the number of new jobs to be allocated, the types of positions required, and the qualifications of personnel needed. The bulk of the new positions were for appraisers, engineers, and farm management supervisors.

REA Telephone Program

Rural Electrification Administration personnel officials faced the difficult problem of recruiting experienced telephone engineers when the rural telephone program authorized by Congress was assigned to it. The telephone industry was also in need of trained personnel, so it could not provide many employees for the program. It was impossible to locate recent college graduates with appropriate training, because no colleges provided specialized training in telephony. Hence, to help meet REA's long-time need for telephone engineers, a training program, patterned after previous junior engineer training programs and the current operating administrative training program, was set up, with the major emphasis on rural telephony. Fifteen recently graduated electrical engineers were recruited for the program.

OFAR Recruitment

Increased international activity brought Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations personnel officials many specialized recruitment problems. It became necessary to recruit high-level agricultural technicians for assignment to the technical assistance work in the Eastern Hemisphere, where State Department missions were established during the year in the Philippines, India, Pakistan, Thailand, Iran, and Ceylon.

OFAR also conducted a high-priority, confidential program of classified studies on agricultural intelligence for the use of military and foreign-policy planners. This again necessitated recruitment of foreign-area analysts and an extensive program of security investigations. Similar recruitment problems for analysts arose when the Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations, under contract from the Economic Cooperation Administration, prepared extensive foreign-nation studies of the ECA areas in Europe.

INCENTIVES AND AWARDS

Activity in the field of incentives and awards increased as more and more emphasis was given to the importance of the incentive program in the broad field of management improvement. Legal authority for granting efficiency awards was given under the Classification Act. No awards were made during the year, however.

The Bureau of the Budget issued instructions for the coordinated administration of cash awards, efficiency awards, step increases for superior accomplishment, and honor awards. The Office of Personnel, as a result, was assigned the administration and operation of all phases of the cash-awards and honor-awards program, together with the new efficiency-awards program. The Office had originally been responsible for step increases for superior accomplishment.

Efficiency Awards

Revised administrative regulations governing the operation of the incentive programs were issued. They provide for systematic review of operations, so that unit supervisors and employees whose work is outstanding in efficiency or economy can be identified and considered for the title 10 efficiency awards. Single committees charged with considering all recommendations for incentive awards were set up in the agencies.

Cash Awards

The number of cash awards approved was approximately 35 percent greater than that granted during the previous fiscal year. Step increases and honor awards both showed gains also.

Honor Awards

Four distinguished service awards to individuals and 2 to units and 135 superior service awards were given during the year.

EXECUTIVE PAY ACT

An important pay act affecting top Department personnel was approved in October of 1949. Ten positions in the Department were included in the Executive Pay Act.

MINIMUM WAGE

Another congressional statute indirectly affected the pay of USDA employees. It was the amendment to the Fair Labor Standards Act, which raised the minimum wage for an employee outside the Government subject to the act from 40 to 75 cents an hour. The Department of Agriculture, as a matter of progressive policy, immediately followed the pay provisions, raising the minimum wage of laborers and craftsmen employed by the Department to 75 cents an hour.

SETTING WAGE RATES

Use of wage boards to set wage rates was extended throughout the Department. Twelve new boards were set up, making a total of 24 in operation. The Fire Fighter Wage Board in Washington was abolished. At the same time, however, the jurisdiction of each regional Forest Service board was broadened to include setting wage rates for fire fighters and related classes of workmen. Examples of the wage boards set up were the seven established in the Soil Conservation Service, one for each SCS region. These boards consisted of the Chief of the Personnel Management Division, the Assistant Regional Director, and the Chief of the Regional Nursery Division.

REVIEWS OF CENTRAL OFFICES

Office of Personnel reviewed the operations of the central personnel offices of the agencies—an extension of the regular program of reviewing the personnel operations of field offices exercising delegated personnel authority. The review of the central offices in general revealed a wholesome condition. Through these reviews, agencies were often assisted in strengthening their personnel programs by having areas needing more emphasis or better organizational location of specific functions pointed out by the reviewers. Discussions of problems affecting the application of personnel policies to program operations proved particularly helpful.

The Civil Service Commission agreed, after being asked by the Office of Personnel, to eliminate so far as possible the impact upon USDA field offices caused by too close spacing of Commission inspections with Office of Personnel reviews. The Commission agreed not to enter USDA field offices 3 months before or after a review by the Office of Personnel.

CLASS SPECIFICATIONS

USDA personnel and operating officials assisted the Civil Service Commission in developing class specifications for 28 series. Some were published; others are being prepared for publication. Some were revisions of existing series.

Guides and specifications for positions peculiar to USDA were developed, an example being the electronics series for the Forest Service. Class specifications for the business accounting, voucher examining, and agricultural marketing specialist series, covering 2,000 positions in Production and Marketing Administration, were developed. Farm Credit Administration also initiated plans for the review and revision of class specifications and minimum qualifications for positions in the banks and corporations under its supervision.

How to simplify operations incident to the development of class specifications and how to insure uniform interpretation of specifications were discussed at many meetings of classification technicians.

A program for developing allocation standards for PMA State Office program specialist jobs was in process at the close of the year. Preliminary thought was given to a classification plan and specifications covering milk marketing employees. This will involve 650 employees under some 40 milk marketing orders. The Civil Service Commission declared the employees of the offices of milk market administrators to be under Civil Service regulations, and placed the positions temporarily under schedule A.

Titles and brief definitions for all classes of wage-board jobs, developed during the preceding fiscal year, were compiled in a manual and published in November of 1949. Amendments and additions were made, and a revision of the manual is currently under way.

EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT

The Department signed an executive-development agreement with the Civil Service Commission. The agreement provides that qualification standards for making promotions and changes in line of work are waived subject to the training and development plans required for each employee selected under this program. Each agency of the Department will operate its own program under a plan to be approved by the Director of Personnel.

The Civil Service Commission earlier had issued general guides and standards for executive-development programs. It was then up to the departments to submit a working agreement to the Commission to enjoy the advantages of the program. The Department of Agriculture was the second Federal agency to receive such approval from the Commission. At the personnel management conference held at Biloxi several years ago, USDA administrators and personnel officials urged that such a program be established for the purpose of training and career placement which would permit the promotion and reassignment of employees in professional or administrative work without regard to CSC qualifications requirements. Office of Personnel will continue to work for extension of the position coverage of the plan to meet the requirements of all USDA agencies.

The Soil Conservation Service immediately developed an executive-development agreement, which was not actually approved until a few days after the end of the fiscal year. Other agencies began preliminary plans for such programs.

Forest Service conducted some studies with the object of validating tests to be used for the early identification of individuals having potentialities for advancement to positions of responsibility. Two

interest or preference tests were added to the battery of tests given junior professional recruits, with the hope of finding further indicators helpful to a more effective career planning and placement of administrative and technical personnel.

An experimental administrative-judgment battery of tests, developed with the Civil Service Commission Test Development Unit, and designed to identify GS-9 and higher-grade employees with potentialities for further advancement to administrative positions, was given to 120 Forest Service field employees. The initial phase of this study will not be completed until the next fiscal year however.

In the Soil Conservation Service, each regional director and his personnel staff prepared a personnel inventory of employees who were qualified now, or might be qualified with additional training, to take over key jobs in SCS regions. The Washington office also built up its personnel inventory file on key jobs in Washington for consideration across regional lines.

CAREER PROGRAMS

A Department-wide career program was begun on a very limited scale. It resulted from a recruitment and placement policy statement made in March of 1950, which placed responsibility on the Office of Personnel for locating candidates in the Department for positions at GS-11 and above when an agency was contemplating recruitment from outside. Agencies were told of qualified candidates within their organization and in other USDA agencies when this selection process was used. Consequently, recruitment from outside the Department for higher-level positions was minimized. Office of Personnel contemplates expansion of this program in the next fiscal year by establishing rosters for positions common to a number of agencies, so that all qualified employees will be given consideration for vacancies that arise.

Important steps were taken toward setting up strong agency career programs, upon which a Department-wide career program eventually will be based. The Civil Service Commission issued a federal employee promotion policy, which contained minimum standards to be a part of each agency program. Consequently, Office of Personnel reviewed agency programs to see that they included the Commission's standards and also followed the basic principles outlined by the Department. Eleven agency career programs had been approved by the end of the year. The other agencies have programs in the final stages of refinement. In many instances, setting up agency career programs was merely a formal step because for many years there has been a more or less accepted career policy in several agencies, including the Forest Service, the Soil Conservation Service, and the Bureau of Animal Industry. The career program, with its promotion-from-within policy, was improved in the Rural Electrification Administration. Heretofore, vacancies were advertised only for grades below GS-12. Now all positions in REA are advertised—that is, notice is given of the vacancy, with a description of the duties and qualifications necessary, with all interested employees having an opportunity to apply and be considered for the job. Farm Credit Administration developed a policy and procedure statement for a

career program for employees paid from its rolls and employees of the Central Bank for Cooperatives.

Probational Trainees

The probational trainee program reached to a new high point, with several hundred trainees on the Department rolls. Under this program, undergraduate college students receive probational appointments to subprofessional positions for work during summer vacations. Upon graduation they become eligible for appointment to professional positions without further examination. This program gives the employing agency an opportunity to train and observe employees before they are given permanent appointments to professional positions. It also makes possible selection of outstanding students.

The Soil Conservation Service, one of the primary participants in this program, retained 56 percent of those appointed in 1949. Altogether, 166 former student trainees were employed during the year and 83 new trainees were selected from the 1950 register.

Veterinary Trainees

The veterinary trainee program, started in the summer of 1949 by the Bureau of Animal Industry, was continued in the summer of 1950, with 78 trainees assigned largely to field veterinary forces engaged in brucellosis- and tuberculosis-eradication programs. The Bureau has been satisfied with results of the program, not only in obtaining superior veterinarian trainees but also in building up good will in the veterinary schools.

Research Intern

Only 5 appointments were made for the 29 internship opportunities provided through the Department's research intern program. This was due partially to lack of funds, but also to reluctance in making advance commitments for appointments. The program, developed in cooperation with the Association of Land Grant Colleges and Universities, provides a means of bringing into the Department outstanding graduate students, who are assigned to research projects on a basis that allows academic credit for the work done.

Examining Responsibility

There are now very few positions for which the Department has examining responsibility that are not covered by appropriate examinations. Registers of eligibles are available to take care of most of the Department's recruitment needs and to fill vacancies as they arise in higher grade scientific, technical, and professional positions peculiar to this Department.

Employment Mobilization

As hostilities loomed at the end of the year, preliminary plans were made on what to do in event of further mobilization. With due regard to the weaknesses of previous war appointment regulations and resulting conversion problems, plans were made to develop an employ-

ment program which would provide expedient appointment, promotion, and release procedures.

The Department Employment Council, set up early in 1949 as an advisory board and clearing house for employment matters, decided during the year to become active in employment matters by participating in the development of employment programs and in the solution of employment problems. The next fiscal year, the Council may be used as a placement organ, whereby agency representatives on a voluntary basis exchange information about vacancies and surpluses.

Qualification standards for all key jobs in Soil Conservation Service were redrafted. SCS contemplates extending this to cover all its jobs.

Qualification standards and examination specifications for State director positions of the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation were prepared.

Forty-seven attorneys were appointed in the Solicitor's Office. Attention was focused on improving attorney appointment procedures, such as additional form letters for use in processing the applications and more effective controls on the applications.

Interdepartmental Placement

Office of Personnel participated on the Interdepartmental Placement Committee, which formulated a plan to set up an interagency administrative placement project. This project will strive to keep in the Federal service well-qualified employees who are affected by reductions in force.

PHYSICAL WELL-BEING OF EMPLOYEES

Personnel administration has generally recognized the importance of the psychological well-being of the people in the Department. Equally important is their physical welfare. The increasing importance of the health services and guidance by the Office of Personnel is evident from the number of calls for service made by employees at the health rooms in the Washington metropolitan area. There were 25,273 such calls this year, as compared with 23,743 in 1949 and 22,710 in 1948.

Nursing service for USDA employees, financed by the agencies, was also available at Chicago, New Orleans, Atlanta, New York, and Minneapolis. However, true employee health services with a medical officer was not available at those installations. The Department participated at the Federal Health Center in Denver.

That the Office of Personnel program to prevent illness is justified on a dollars-and-cents basis, as well as on humanitarian grounds, is shown in the reduction of sick leave.

End of Immunizations

Immunizations against Rocky Mountain spotted fever for employees occupationally exposed to the disease were discontinued, despite the fact that more cases were reported in the Forest Service than before. The immunizations were discontinued because the Public

Health Service stopped producing the serum and because the immunizations were not always dependable. A newer treatment of the disease is so effective that the Office of Personnel decided to follow a policy of treatment rather than immunization.

Diabetic Survey

As one phase of the health program, a voluntary survey to detect diabetics was begun in the Department. By the end of the year, the survey had been completed in 7 bureaus with a total employment of 1,070. Participation percentage was 61.7. A few positive reactions found were reduced after later retesting. Employees with symptoms of the disease were referred to their personal physicians for treatment. The survey will continue next year.

The Department continued to cooperate with the Red Cross in obtaining blood. There were 461 donations, as compared with 310 donations to both hospitals and the Red Cross in 1948.

Mental Health

Through a series of talks and film showings, supervisors throughout the Department were made aware of some of the problems of mental health. The project proved so successful that it will be continued next year.

LEGISLATION

About 25 permanent and temporary laws directly affecting personnel administration were passed by Congress. Some made it necessary for Department personnel officials to determine new policies and procedures.

Aside from the more important acts, which have been mentioned elsewhere in this report, Public Laws 269 and 316 were passed. The former amended the Veterans Preference Act to provide reinstatement of preference to mothers of veterans who might lose their preference status through remarriage whenever they are legally separated or divorced, or their husbands die. The latter law extended benefits of annual and sick leave laws on a pro rata basis to part-time Federal employees on regular tours of duty covering not less than 5 days in any administrative work week.

SUPERVISORY TRAINING

Obviously, the Department cannot afford the luxury, if it can be called that, of half-trained employees.

Training throughout the Department has continually stressed the supervisors' responsibility for training their employees in such a manner as to get the highest, most efficient production possible from each employee with satisfaction to the employee. As experiments have repeatedly shown, the highest production can be obtained only from employees who are respected as individuals and who, in turn, have a will to work. This sensitive, intangible will to work has been recognized as the most important factor affecting productivity in the Department.

Because a supervisor's job is to maintain high morale that will result in high employee efficiency, the training of supervisors was particularly emphasized during the year.

The Bureau of Animal Industry concluded training practically all of its supervisors in a course entitled, "Vision in Supervision." Principles of supervision were tied in directly with operating problems of the supervisors being trained, and discussion throughout the courses, given both in the field and in Washington, was by supervisors as well as professional trainers.

Farmers Home Administration published a supervisors manual.

A special committee to determine the need for and planning of training supervisors and administrators for research units was set up in the Bureau of Agricultural and Industrial Chemistry.

The Production and Marketing Administration initiated a program of executive and supervisory development. Nearly a hundred top-level PMA supervisors participated in several pilot courses, and made evaluation answers at the end of them. Training techniques were experimented with during these courses. A system of objective testing was used, one test before the course and one afterward. Comparison of the two grades was discussed by the group. Each individual in the course selected a subject on administration and supervision, prepared beforehand for it, and led the discussion of this subject before the group. The group, in turn, criticized the presentation when it was completed. A recording was made of the discussion for the leader to replay and possibly improve on.

The training program proved so successful that it will be extended to all levels of supervision in PMA. Currently, adaptations of the program for 1,400 lower grade employees is being made for presentation next year.

The Forest Service placed emphasis on administrative techniques and resource management at its field training camps for new technical personnel. A typical Forest Service district was discussed and analyzed, and the group being trained worked out plans for solving problems in it.

Training in skiing, winter rescue, avalanche control, and administration of winter sports areas was given by the Forest Service in some of its regions where winter sports are important.

Several Forest Service field training officers, at the request of a State forestry official, conducted an area training seminar for officers, fire wardens, and other State forestry employees.

Soil Conservation Service was particularly active in supervisory and work-improvement training. Each SCS region established a definite program analysis to discover bottlenecks in production. Then each of the regions tried to establish training to eliminate the bottlenecks that resulted from lack of knowledge of program development.

Federal Crop Insurance Corporation inaugurated an informal training program, chiefly in office management. Employees conducted the sessions and prepared a correspondence manual. A broader orientation training program for all FCIC employees is planned for the next year, with all section and division chiefs giving nontechnical talks about their units and their relationship to the whole crop insurance program. Similar training programs have been under way in FCIC Chicago offices.

Rural Electrification Administration conducted an intensive training program for candidates selected from the junior management assistant register. The program, which had a thorough pre-orientation, provided rotating work assignments of about 5 weeks each among the REA divisions, where trainees received group instruction and on-the-job training. Trainees had to spend 4 weeks at an REA-financed cooperative, where actual day-to-day operations of a typical system were studied. Final phase of the program was an intensive training period in the REA division to which the trainee was permanently assigned toward the end of the year. Success of the program was so pronounced that the agency intends to expand it next year.

Visual Aids

Training officials throughout the Department spearheaded the planning and conducting of the visual aids workshop. More than a hundred supervisors and staff officials of the Department participated in this workshop, which was designed to make employees more conscious of the need of presenting their ideas in understandable and interesting fashion while training other employees. The workshop was conducted on an interdepartmental basis because of the expense involved.

Public Speaking

As Department employees are often called on to present ideas to groups of people throughout the United States, the Office of Personnel, with agency training officials, published a booklet, *Talks—A Guide to More Effective Speaking*, to assist employees in improving their public-speaking ability. Farmers Home Administration organized a nonofficial toastmaster club to promote training in public speaking.

Administrative Management Training

Training in administration progressed. The first field course, consisting of lectures by experts both within and outside the Department, was held in Philadelphia in October and November 1949.

An experimental course was conducted in Washington. Participants prepared lectures on special subjects with which they were familiar. The idea was to see to what extent a field group of administrators could plan and conduct their own training with a minimum of direction from Washington. A course in administrative management was scheduled for October, 1950, in Chicago.

The Office of Personnel was given the responsibility of arranging programs and speakers for the bureau chiefs' monthly luncheon meetings.

Informed Employees

Six departmental orientation meetings for 1,500 new employees were conducted. The Forest Service, Soil Conservation Service, Rural Electrification Administration, and the Farmers Home Administration conducted special orientation meetings in addition to the departmental meeting.

Correspondence Training

The Correspondence Style Manual was revised. This manual is designed to train employees in the preparation of accurate and effective correspondence with the public and Government agencies. Several agencies prepared special training devices, such as lists of specialized shorthand words and phrases peculiar to the agency. A group of Department employees concerned with office-management training was set up to serve as an informal sounding board for new techniques.

WORK WITH COLLEGES

Department recruitment representatives in each State were given information on the needs of the Department for entrance-level recruitment in scientific, technical, and professional positions. The representatives, in turn, contacted faculty members and senior students of colleges offering courses appropriate to the positions in the Department.

Joint Committee

The Joint Land-Grant College-Department of Agriculture Committee on Training for Government Service met twice to make recommendations on current educational background and specialized training needed by college students thinking of employment in USDA. Ways and means of meeting increasing demands for trained personnel to help with agricultural programs abroad, including Point IV work, received attention. A brochure explaining the work, history, and composition of the joint committee was printed. Two national workshops, one on marketing research and one on consumer education, were held as an outgrowth of the Committee's interest and aid.

Soil Conservation Service was particularly active as an agency in working directly with colleges on SCS recruitment needs and desirable curriculum changes to meet those needs. The attempt by the SCS Regional Engineer in the Pacific Northwest to get agricultural engineers better suited for work in soil and water conservation was especially noteworthy.

EMPLOYEE COUNCIL

An employee council was set up to serve as a means of communication between Washington employees and the Director of Personnel. The council, composed of 16 elected members from the Department's agencies, organized 7 committees to study matters concerning the general welfare of employees. This opportunity for employees to participate through their elected representatives in the formulation of personnel policies and practices will not only be of assistance in obtaining true employee opinion, but may also improve employee morale. A similar council set up within the Production and Marketing Administration serves in liaison capacity between PMA employees and the PMA representative on the Department employee council.

FAIR EMPLOYMENT

New and more complete regulations on fair employment practices and appeals were prepared and distributed throughout the Department. Office of Personnel assists the Fair Employment Officer in operating the fair employment program for the Department.

EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

The Department Employee Handbook was revised. Farmers Home Administration prepared and distributed 5,000 employee handbooks entitled, "Information for all Employees of FHA." This handbook supplements, without duplicating, the Department handbook, and contains a complete index for FHA employees on all personnel matters.

PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED EMPLOYEES

The Civil Service Commission set a precedent when it certified to the Production and Marketing Administration one of PMA's physically handicapped employees. It was done on the basis of waiving the apportionment requirement in his behalf. Thus the way was opened for greater opportunities for physically handicapped persons in the Department of Agriculture.

EFFICIENCY RATINGS

Office of Personnel continued to give agencies assistance on technical problems arising in efficiency rating administration. Preliminary studies were made on how to adjust efficiency rating administration when plans are completed for the new system legislated after the end of the fiscal year. Ratings under it would have to be based on standards of performance. Soil Conservation Service began experimenting with a plan for the development of standards of performance for all jobs in the organization.

The field boards of review on efficiency ratings have now been in operation for a year and a half. Although the Department still believes the principle of field boards and oral hearings for all employees is sound, last year's experience indicated the system did not operate as effectively as it should. Partially to blame has been the increase in each Civil Service Commission chairman's case work load. As a result it took longer to schedule and adjudicate a case. Records showed that frequently it took as long to complete an oral hearing as it formerly took to complete a case conducted on a written basis. Lack of travel funds has also impeded progress.

Office of Personnel did some preliminary work toward simplifying the appeals procedure, not only within the Department but also with inter-departmental groups. The varied types of appeals to separate authorities have been confusing to employees and supervisors; needed action often has been delayed and administrative problems created because of the long time taken in adjudicating these diverse appeals.

ORGANIZATION CHANGES

There were no major organizational changes in the Department of Agriculture during the year. Minor adjustments were made, however, such as abolishing the Office of the Administrator, Research and Marketing Act, and transferring its activities to the Office of the Administrator, Agricultural Research Administration.

In the Production and Marketing Administration a new position, Assistant Administrator for Management, was created. The Budget and Management Branch was abolished and its functions were assigned to the newly created staff offices for Personnel Service, Administrative Services, and Budget, which report to the Assistant Administrator for Management. This was later changed after the close of the fiscal year. The functions of the Shipping and Storage Branch were combined with assignments drawn from other branches to create a new Transportation and Warehousing Branch. The Marketing Facilities Branch and the Marketing Research Branch were combined into a Marketing Facilities Research Branch.

The States Relations Division of the Soil Conservation Service was eliminated. Some of its functions were placed in the Office of the Chief.

Office of Personnel approved 127 of 134 requests for organizational changes submitted by the agencies for prior approval. Suggested changes were incorporated before approval was given in about 25 percent of the cases; 5 percent were rejected or returned to the agencies for further study.

EQUAL PENALTIES FOR EQUAL OFFENSES

A large organization like the Department of Agriculture cannot run without rules, some of which must govern employees' conduct. When these rules are broken, disciplinary action, which is neither too stringent nor too loose, becomes necessary. Equal penalties for equal offenses must be administered fairly. Otherwise, the morale of all employees will be undermined.

To help achieve this fair administration, the handbook, Guide for Use in Handling Disciplinary Cases, was revised. This handbook has proved valuable in insuring more uniform treatment of the less serious disciplinary cases at the agency level, and more uniform recommendations in more serious cases requiring the prior approval of the Director of Personnel.

Office of Personnel conducted 137 investigations, involving the following principal types:

Personnel investigations, such as alleged misconduct on the part of USDA employees involving fiscal irregularities, excessive use of intoxicants, and improper use of Government-owned vehicles.

Security clearance investigations of employees having access to classified secret information. This type of investigation is designed not only to determine an employee's loyalty but also to view him from the standpoint of character, integrity, and discretion, so that he may be properly entrusted with such information.

Suitability investigations of employees whose positions empower them to negotiate contracts and of employees in administrative and fiscal key positions.

Program investigations, which arise from alleged irregularities or difficulties in the management of the Department's action programs.

Prompt and effective disciplinary action in the cases of employees who have willfully violated laws or Department regulations, or become involved in misconduct, has always been regarded by the Office of Personnel as an important phase of sound personnel management. Dishonest or otherwise undesirable employees can thus be quickly separated from the Service, and suspicion removed from honest employees.

There was an increase of disciplinary actions under delegated authority this year. The foot-and-mouth disease eradication program in Mexico contributed heavily to this increase.

The disciplinary cases processed under delegated authority which were postaudited by the Office of Personnel resulted in 64 disciplinary suspensions, 53 removals for cause (delinquency or misconduct) of temporary employees or those serving probational periods, 118 resignations of employees not in good standing, and 89 letters of reprimand.

On the other hand, the Office reviewed and processed 257 disciplinary cases submitted for prior approval of the Director of Personnel. These cases involved suspensions over 10 days, which is the dividing line between cases susceptible to agency action under delegated authority and those needing prior approval before final action is taken. Ninety-two cases were disposed of without action. The others resulted in 25 disciplinary suspensions, 14 removals for cause, 33 resignations of employees not in good standing, and 93 letters of reprimand.

Also agencies were directed to terminate the services of 24 appointees about whom derogatory information other than loyalty was disclosed by record checks and inquiries conducted by the Civil Service Commission under the loyalty program.

Security Clearance for Foreign Travel

Security clearance work showed a marked increase in volume after April 1950, when the Department issued its security regulations. Office of Personnel processed 1,154 requests for security clearance for employees who had to attend an international conference or travel abroad, or who were members of an interdepartmental committee sponsored by other Federal agencies.

The Loyalty Board of the Department was assisted by the Office of Personnel, which acted as a liaison in all loyalty matters between it, the Loyalty Review Board, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, USDA agencies, and USDA employees.

Only 14 employees were removed this year after preferment of charges, as contrasted with 22 the preceding year. Appeals by veteran-preference employees increased. Five appealed to the Civil Service Commission, as compared with two in 1949. In each instance the Commission upheld the Department's action.

PERSONNEL REGULATIONS

Office of Personnel issued 1,037 pages of personnel instructions to agencies. These resulted from laws, decisions, regulations, and policies affecting personnel work in the Department.

A system of incorporating applicable regulations of the Civil Service Commission by reference was begun, with the object of getting most personnel instructions in the Federal Personnel Manual.

Farmers Home Administration made major progress in reducing to a minimum its personnel instructions. The great number of FHA personnel instructions came about as a result of abolishing the 1947 regional office organization.

WORK SIMPLIFICATION

Nearly 130 formal recommendations for improving personnel operations resulted from the Department's work simplification program, a joint operation of the Office of Personnel and agency personnel offices. Recommended improvements within the jurisdiction of the Department were put into effect. The Civil Service Commission also put into effect, Government-wide, many of the recommendations. One of 18 operations that have been simplified within the past two years is the replacement in PMA of its auxiliary personnel folders for active field employees with a roster file in strict alphabetical order set up in binders.

Soil Conservation Service Work Improvement

Soil Conservation Service developed a work improvement plan which incorporates all the functions of planning, execution, inspection, and improvement of its work at every level. This plan, with two parts of particular interest as far as personnel is concerned, is now being placed into effect in all parts of the country.

KEEPING PERSONNEL POLICIES UP-TO-DATE

People often ask how personnel information reaches its desired objective in the Department of Agriculture, how personnel policies are kept fresh and up-to-date, and, sometimes, whether or not field experience and opinions are considered.

Peoria Personnel Management Conference

Some of those questions were answered at the Fourth Biennial Personnel Management Conference, held in Peoria, Ill. Department administrators, personnel officers, and key officials (both Washington and field) critically examined existing personnel policies, procedures, and regulations with the object of adjusting the present program, or devising new methods or programs, to meet changing conditions in the Department. Ninety approved recommendations involving various phases of personnel administration were made at this conference. Of these, 25 were immediately put into effect, and 22 more were completed by the Office of Personnel and forwarded to other Federal agencies having final jurisdiction.

"PACKAGE PLAN"

Several agencies of the Department adopted in whole or in part the Bureau of the Budget's so-called package plan for maintaining personnel records. This system provides for the maintenance of only one record, a service record card, in addition to the official personnel

folder. The card is posted manually. Its installation eliminates several tickler card files and provides a ready source of information on status, retention registers, preparation of regular and special reports, and periodic and longevity step increases.

The Rural Electrification Administration made preliminary plans to install a position identification slip as an attachment to the service record card, thus eliminating any position control now necessary by the REA budget office and also the review of some personnel recommendations by the classification officer.

The package system was formally adopted by the Solicitor's Office and put into full use as far as personnel operations were concerned. Plans were also made to see how to use the package budget-wise.

Soil Conservation Service also installed part of the package plan in the Washington office and in most of its regional offices.

Federal Crop Insurance Corporation adopted several new methods of keeping personnel records.

Decentralization of Inactive Folders in PMA

The Production and Marketing Administration program of decentralizing inactive field personnel folders maintained heretofore in Washington was 75 percent complete by the end of the year with 14,000 folders shipped. All inactive personnel folders were reviewed to see whether or not they could be sent to the field offices for consolidation with folders in those offices. Each personnel office started sending lists of current active employees to each personnel office who, in turn, checked the remaining inactive folders for employees who might now be employed by PMA in some other area. Thus, there will be but one official personnel folder for each PMA employee.

USDA ACCIDENT FATALITIES

More Department workers—37—died in line of duty than in any other full year since 1941. The increase was not due solely to the tragic forest fire in Mann Gulch near Helena, Montana, in August, when 13 Forest Service men were killed. Deaths from motor vehicle accidents and other causes also increased.

When the trend became apparent early in 1950, the Office of Personnel and agency officials took immediate action to increase safeguards on hazardous operations. The upward swing of fatalities was checked; reports for the last half of the year showed only four fatal injuries.

Need for an effective fire and evacuation organization in Washington office buildings became apparent near the end of the year. Preliminary plans were developed to establish an organization that would be adequate for any emergency.

A Safety Handbook was revised by the Soil Conservation Service, but will not be distributed until the next fiscal year. SCS accident frequency rates for the last half of the fiscal year were about 10 percent lower than for the same period in 1949. This is particularly noteworthy because the SCS rate for several years has been remarkably low in comparison with the rates in industry and elsewhere in Government.

Office of Personnel reviewed 19 manuscripts from a safety standpoint during the year, making recommendations for the inclusion of safe practices where dangerous processes and substances were recommended.

The Production and Marketing Administration, expecting an increase of accidents because of grain-storage work, developed a Plan of Action and a Safe Practice Guide, which was distributed to PMA State and county committees. Instructions involving precautionary measures for inspecting and fumigating grain were also compiled.

PMA suspended work on a project involving regulations governing the licensing of drivers and the maintenance of automotive equipment because it expected action in this field by the Bureau of the Budget, the Civil Service Commission, and USDA.

Projects started by PMA include the following: Testing the effectiveness and practicability of an antifog formula for use on interior surfaces of auto glass; locating and testing a shoe sole having nonskid qualities on a wide variety of surfaces and developing a practical procurement method for employees needing this protection; developing a safer method for testing samples of seed that have been treated with poisonous compounds.

Employees Compensation Act

There was a large increase in accident costs during the year. This was due partly to passage of Public Law 357 of the 81st Congress. This Employees Compensation Act provided greatly needed increased injury benefits and broadened the employee compensation coverage.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The fiscal year 1950 was a busy year. Much was done. More remains to be done. It has always been this dual viewpoint of our personnel officials—looking over our shoulders at the accomplishments of the past, and then looking straight ahead with a firm resolve to meet the oncoming personnel problems, situations, and adjustments—that has kept the *Department of Agriculture staffed with capable public servants.*

